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ABSTRACT

To portray the status of minimum competency testing programs nationwide; as of June 30, 1979, on-site visits were conducted with directors of all 31 state programs and 20 local district programs. Most programs were developed since 1976; 14 state and 13 local programs are fully implemented. The state board of education mandated 16 state programs; state legislatures mandated 15 state programs. Seven local programs were state mandated. Court litigation has occurred only in Florida, Delaware, Maryland, and North Carolina. Four goals were most frequently cited: remediation, curriculum, improvement, accountability, and certification of basic skills prior to graduation. All programs tested reading and mathematics skills; 27 state and 15 local programs tested language skills, and a few programs tested other skills. Most programs included elementary and high school students, and recognized special education and bilingual populations. Type of test varied (in-house, commercial or tailored), as did responsibility for setting standards and selecting tests (state, local, or shared). All programs were locally administered. Most reported results to students, teachers, parents, administrators, and boards. Most programs were locally funded and staffed by in-house curriculum or assessment specialists, not consultants. Seven states and four districts conducted evaluations. (CP)

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A Study of Minimum Competency Testing Programs

FINAL SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS REPORT

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NOTE TO THE READER

The materials contained in this report were prepared for the National Institute of Education (NIE), Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, under contract number (400-79-0003). This contract was awarded December 15, 1978, as the result of a competitive bidding procedure, to National Evaluation Systems, Inc. (NES), a firm that has developed and administered minimum competency tests under contract to State and local education agencies.

The purpose of this contract was to obtain previously unavailable descriptive information about minimum competency testing programs for the enlightenment of educators, researchers, and others interested in this area. Information on the consequences or impacts of these programs was not within the scope of work for this contract. However, NIE is currently planning a complementary study that will focus on program impacts.

In obtaining the descriptive information presented here, the NES project staff, during the spring of 1979, interviewed the directors of all State minimum competency testing programs and of 21 local district programs. Subsequent to these visits, NES staff developed written program descriptions, and these were sent to the program directors for verification. It is these verified program descriptions that form the basis for this report.

It should be emphasized that the information presented here provides a snapshot of the status of minimum competency testing programs as of June 30, 1979, and, owing to the dynamic nature of these programs, may not portray the programs as they are operating today.

Further, it should be emphasized that any opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect NIE or HEW position or policy, and no endorsement of minimum competency testing or of any model described in this report by NIE or HEW should be inferred.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Summary and Analysis Report for the "Study of Minimum Competency Testing Programs" is based upon information gathered about 31 state and 20 local district testing programs around the United States and documented in the Comprehensive Report. On-site visits were conducted for the purpose of collecting information, both published and informal, about each program's policy history, goals, competencies assessed, grade levels targeted for assessment, test instruments, performance standards, test administration and dissemination, provisions for special populations, program resources, evaluation, and future directions. While one set of discussion guidelines provided a framework for the conduct of each site visit, the collection of published documents about a program before the visit enabled the interviewer to focus on those questions which were not answered by the documents. Each site visit, therefore, was tailored to the particular program under study.

The format of the report follows that of the individual program descriptions included in the Comprehensive Report; major trends are summarized within each section and notable exceptions to the trends are presented. The report was prepared by Marcy R. Perkins, with assistance from Anne Frost and Mary Tobin and input and review from William Gorth. In the following paragraphs is a brief summary of some of the major highlights of the study.

Sixteen of the 31 state-level programs were mandated by the state Board of Education, and 15 were initiated by the state legislature. Two of the legislated mandates call for temporary programs; one State Board-initiated program and one legislated program permit voluntary participation of local school districts. Two other states emphasize the competency-based instructional aspects of their programs rather than the testing components.

Of the 20 local programs studied, five developed in states without statewide requirements for minimum competency testing. Of the remaining 15 districts, eight began instituting minimum competency testing programs prior to state mandates, while seven districts implemented programs in response to such mandates.

The majority of programs, both state and local, were developed in the two to three years since 1976, but the age of programs ranged from 18 years to less than one year with ongoing pilot-testing. Fourteen state

programs have been fully implemented, while 17 are being phased in. For example, many state programs are introducing new graduation requirements or curriculum changes over a period of years and hence, these programs will not be "in place" until some time in the future. By comparison, 13 of the 20 local programs have already been fully implemented, while seven programs are phasing in mandated changes.

Programs in only four states have had litigation associated with them in any way--Delaware, Florida, Maryland, and North Carolina--and the majority of this activity has occurred in Florida.

With respect to goals and purposes, 14 states cited certification of basic skills competency prior to high school graduation as a major purpose, and two states reported using competency achievement as one criterion for grade-to-grade promotion as a reason for implementing a minimum competency testing program. The most frequently cited purpose for instituting such a program was to identify students in need of remediation; 19 states reported this purpose. Curriculum improvement was mentioned by 10 states as a major program goal. By comparison, 16 local districts reported certification of basic skills as one reason for developing a minimum competency testing program; four districts cited the use of test results, along with other information, to determine grade-to-grade promotion as a major purpose of the program. Eleven programs reported purposes related to providing remediation and seven districts mention curriculum change as a major purpose behind program implementation.

Reading and mathematics were competency areas assessed in all state and local programs. Twenty-seven of the state programs assessed skills in language arts and/or writing, while 15 local districts assess these same skills. Skills in other subject areas, such as speaking, listening, consumer economics, science, government, and history, are assessed in only a few programs. Almost all of the tests administered in both state and local programs consist primarily of multiple-choice items, and a writing sample is the most frequently selected non-multiple-choice assessment.

Regarding provisions made for special populations, about two-thirds of all programs studied specifically mentioned the category of special education/learning disabled students. The second most frequently mentioned population was that of limited English-speaking students. A few programs also make provisions for transfer students, four state programs leave decisions about special populations to the local school districts, and a few programs are still in the process of deciding what provisions should be made for whom. The types of provisions made in various programs, on an individual or group basis, included exemption from testing, administering tests with different formats (e.g., Braille, taped), and

permitting differential standards to be established. In a few programs, special education students are tested under other programs, and in a few others, decisions are made strictly on a case-by-case basis.

Staffing for competency testing programs comes most frequently from assessment divisions of the state and local agencies, with the curriculum divisions providing most of the programs' remaining support. Of the state programs, 20% are funded by state monies and the remainder require program support to come from the local districts. In most cases, the local programs are supported by local district funding.

Commonly expressed future goals of programs include improving test instruments and remedial programs and developing systems for accurately assessing program impacts on the school systems. Some programs are beginning to explore the possibility of testing more life-oriented skills, and a few are planning to expand testing to include other subject areas.

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Introduction

The purposes of the Summary and Analysis Report are to summarize major trends in state and local minimum competency testing programs, highlight similarities and differences among the various programs, and analyze future directions for minimum competency testing. For consistency and ease of access to information, this report follows the format of the Comprehensive Report of minimum competency testing programs, on which this report is based. Therefore, sections of the report contain summaries across all state and local programs pertaining to policy, phase of implementation, litigation, goals and purposes, competencies, standards, testing, administration and dissemination, provisions for special populations, staffing, program evaluation, and future directions.

In the original Request for Proposals (RFP) for the study of minimum competency testing (MCT) programs, 34 state programs were targeted for site visits, including Massachusetts, the pilot test site. Between the time the RFP was issued and the time of the site visits, two additional states (Illinois and South Carolina) had mandated MCT and were therefore included in the study, making a total of 36 sites to be visited.

During the course of the study, four of the 36 programs were found to be lacking in one or more components that define minimum competency testing, and one has not implemented its MCT mandate. These were, respectively: Colorado, Indiana, Oklahoma, Washington, and Wyoming. For the purposes of the study, MCT programs were defined as those which both set desired performance standards and also define consequences that affect students as a result of meeting, or not meeting, the standards (e.g., remediation, the receipt of a high school diploma, etc.). The reasons that Colorado, Indiana, Oklahoma, and Washington did not meet these criteria are illustrated in the brief descriptions of these programs which follow:

(1) COLORADO: its legislation restricts only those local districts that choose to adopt MCT; there is, however, no statewide requirement for MCT.

(2) INDIANA: a comprehensive assessment and planning process is called for in this state, but, in this process, setting of performance standards and consequences are not mandated.

(3) OKLAHOMA: only a statewide assessment is conducted here, with no standards set or consequences defined.

(4) WASHINGTON: accountability legislation provides for statewide assessment and remediation, but MCT is not a component.

The state which has not implemented the mandate for MCT is Wyoming, and it has set no time schedule for implementation. These five programs, therefore, have been excluded from in-depth description and from summary statistics.

Finally, although Texas has now mandated MCT at the state level, this action occurred too late for it to be included in the study; a local district in Texas was selected, however, to help represent MCT activity in that state. The final number of state programs upon which this report is based, therefore, is 31.

With respect to local programs, a sample of 21 were selected for study. It is upon 20 of these programs that the local district summary statistics presented in this report are based; the omitted program underwent a change in management and design during the course of the study, so that its results could not be verified in time for inclusion in this report. In order to select these programs, 169 local district MCT programs were initially identified, of which 52 (representing a mix with respect to locality and state versus no state mandate) were surveyed for such information as program goals and purposes, relationship to state programs, standards and the methods by which they are set, grades assessed, uses of test results, provisions for special student populations, involvement of a variety of audiences in planning, and features unique to a program in the view of the program contacts. After a careful consideration of the results of the survey, the specific programs were selected to represent the wide diversity of MCT activities in different regions of the country, and in states with different requirements. Of the 20 districts selected, five districts are in states which have to date not issued mandates for minimum competency testing. Of the remaining 15 districts, seven developed programs in response to either State Board or legislative action, while eight districts implemented programs in advance of such action.

Legislative and Policy History

Policy history. Of the 31 state minimum competency programs studied, 16 were mandated by the State Board of Education (SBE) and 15 by the state legislature. These are listed in Table 1. While, for the most part,

legislation or Board policy specifies the requirements and various responsibilities for implementing MCT programs, there are some important differences which should be noted. In Michigan, for example, a combination of legislative and State Board policy structures the program, and in Nevada legislative action superseded SBE policy. In Delaware and Arizona, the emphasis is on the performance-based or competency-based aspects of their testing programs, and/or both, verification of competency achievement occurs at the local level.

In addition to differences such as these, there are variations in the types of state mandates; the major types of mandates and the states having such mandates are listed in Table 2. Most common were mandates issued at the state level that express a commitment to implementing a minimum competency testing program and require all districts to develop such programs. States with this type of mandate differ in terms of the responsibilities undertaken by the state and local agencies. In Florida, for example, the state has assumed responsibility for the major tasks associated with program implementation (e.g., test development). In other states, such as New Hampshire, local districts are required to carry out many of these tasks. Nonetheless, in both cases, local districts must initiate minimum competency testing.

By comparison, a different type of mandate was issued in Idaho and Illinois, both of these states having district-option programs. In Idaho, the State Department of Education has developed a program of proficiency testing in which local districts are invited to participate; those who do participate are then subject to state requirements. In Illinois, the State Department of Education provides technical assistance to those local districts which voluntarily decide to adopt minimum competency testing.

Still a third type of mandate was issued in Kansas and Maine where legislation has required testing only on a temporary basis. In Kansas, a two-year pilot program of competency-based education and minimum competency testing was mandated. At the end of the two years, the legislature will decide whether to continue the program. In Maine, a one-time statewide assessment was legislated, partly for the purpose of developing competencies which could be used for graduation requirements. Following the assessment, however, ongoing activity has focused on a planning process to assist local districts in setting educational goals, objectives, and performance standards; MCT may or may not become apart of this process in the future.

TABLE 1

Responsibility for Initial Mandate
Calling for State MCT Programs

State Board of Education	State Legislature
Alabama	Arizona[1]
Delaware	California
Georgia	Connecticut
Idaho	Florida
Maryland	Illinois
Massachusetts	Kansas
Missouri	Kentucky
Nebraska	Louisiana
New Hampshire	Maine
New Mexico	Michigan[2]
New York	New Jersey
Oregon	Nevada[3]
Rhode Island	North Carolina
Tennessee	South Carolina
Utah	Virginia
Vermont	(1979: Texas)

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[1] Arizona: competency-based program initiated by legislative mandate and directed by SBE mandate

[2] Michigan: legislative mandate for assessment in grades 4 and 7, SBE mandate for assessment in grade 10

[3] Nevada: legislative action superseded SBE action

TABLE 2

Major Types of State MCT Mandates

State mandate for MCT program; all LEAs participate; varying responsibiliites given to LEAs.	State mandate specifying optional LEA participation; amount of SEA assistance, control varies.	State mandate authorizing study of MCT; findings to assist in deciding whether to implement MCT program.
Alabama	Idaho	Kansas
Arizona	Illinois	Maine
California		
Connecticut		
Delaware[1]		
Florida		
Georgia		
Kentucky		
Louisiana		
Maryland		
Massachusetts		
Michigan		
Missouri		
Nebraska		
New Hampshire		
New Jersey		
New Mexico		
New York		
Nevada		
North Carolina		
Oregon		
Rhode Island		
South Carolina		
Tennessee		
Utah		
Vermont		
Virginia		
(1979: Texas)		

[1] Delaware: goal-directed and performance-based system with local district autonomy.

Of the 20 local district programs, four were initiated as the result of a State Board of Education mandate and three as the result of state legislation. Five programs developed entirely as a result of local initiative in states without MCT requirements of any kind; in states with MCT requirements, eight local districts initiated their own programs either before or in addition to the state program. The methods by which all of these local programs were initiated are summarized in Table 3.

For the most part, it is the public school system that is affected by both the state and local mandates. In both Connecticut and North Carolina, however, nonpublic schools were originally subject to the same provisions of the law as public schools. As a result of recent legislative action, North Carolina nonpublic schools now participate in the state minimum competency program on a strictly voluntary basis.

Phase of implementation. The majority of the minimum competency testing programs under study--over two-thirds of the state programs and three-fifths of the local district programs--have been initiated within the last three years. Table 4 lists the state and local programs that have been in existence for less than a year, for one to five years, or for five years or more. A few programs were initiated in the early 1970's, Michigan and Georgia began their programs in 1969, and the Denver, Colorado program, the oldest one of all, has been in existence for over 18 years.

Of the 31 state programs, only 14 are fully implemented. The remaining states are field-testing, or phasing in graduation requirements and/or curriculum changes over the next few years. Some, like New Hampshire, require districts to complete all steps in program development within a certain period (e.g., five years), but districts determine when each individual step will be completed. Thirteen local programs are fully implemented, while seven are phasing in some or all aspects of their programs. As a result of phasing in programs, many states and districts have not yet formulated procedures for, for example, standard setting or scoring and analysis.

Associated litigation. Although many states and local districts anticipate legal action as a result of minimum competency testing and remediation programs, only four of the states under study have had suits brought against them: Florida, North Carolina, Delaware, and Virginia.

Florida has so far had four cases brought against the state as a result of the minimum competency program. The first case involved the State Student Assessment Test, Part II (SSAT-II), which is the Functional Literacy Test administered to eleventh-graders as part of their graduation

TABLE 3

Responsibility for Initiation of Local District MCT Programs

Local Initiative in States without State MCT Programs	Local Initiative in States with State MCT Programs	Implementation of State Law	Implementation of State Board Mandate
Gary, IN	Omaha, NE[3]	Santa Clara, CA	Salem, OR
Denver, CO	Lawton, MI[1]	Orange County, VA	Parkrose, OR
Rocky River, OH	Detroit, MI[1]	Hillsborough, FL	S. Burlington, VT
Bettendorf, IA	Fitchburg, MA[2]		Thomas County, GA
Kanawha County, WV	Houston, TX[3]		
	Charlotte-Mecklenburg, NC[1]		
	ConVal, NH[3]		
	Columbus, KS[3]		

[1] Also participating in respective state programs.

[2] Part of program developed in response to state requirements.

[3] Program developed prior to issuing of state mandate but meets state requirements.

TABLE 4

Length of Time State and Local MCT Programs Have Been In Existence

1 YEAR OR LESS (1979 - 1978)		1-5 YEARS (1979 - 1975)		5 YEARS OR MORE (1975 or before)	
STATE	LOCAL	STATE	LOCAL	STATE	LOCAL
Connecticut	Houston, TX	Alabama	Santa Clara, CA	Arizona	Denver, CO
Illinois	Orange County, VA	California	Hillsborough, FL	Delaware	Gary, IN
Kansas		Idaho	Thomas County, GA	Florida	Lawton, MI
Kentucky		Louisiana	Bettendorf, IA	Georgia	Omaha, NE
Maine		Nebraska	Columbus, KS	Maryland	Salem, OR
Massachusetts		Nevada	Detroit, MI	Michigan	Portland, OR
Missouri		New Hampshire	ConVal, NH	Oregon	Fitchburg, MA
Rhode Island		New Jersey	Char-Mecklenburg, NC,		
South Carolina		New Mexico	Rocky River, OH		
		New York	S. Burlington, VT		
		North Carolina	Kanawha County, WV		
		Tennessee			
		Utah			
		Vermont			
		Virginia			

requirement. In October 1978 a class action suit was filed in the Tampa Division of the U.S. District Court on behalf of three classes of plaintiffs: all present and future twelfth-graders in Florida public schools who have failed and would continue to fail the SSAT-II; all present and future black students in the same schools who have failed and would continue to fail the SSAT-II; and all present and future black twelfth-graders in Hillsborough County who have failed and would continue to fail the SSAT-II. Defendents named in the case included the Commissioner of Education, the Governor, and the Department of Education.

The plaintiffs advanced a number of claims, including that the test was racially biased, that the plaintiffs were given neither adequate notice nor adequate preparation time, and that the use of the SSAT-II to classify and group students in need of remediation reinstituted segregation in the public schools.

In a ruling handed down in July 1979, the Court found the "schedule for the implementation of . . . [the Functional Literacy Test to be] a violation of the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment . . ." and that "Until the 1982-83 school year, . . . [requiring that a student pass the SSAT-II to receive a diploma] is a violation of the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment . . ." (Debra P. v. Turlington, 1979, p. 2). As a result, the Court, although permitting the Department to continue to administer the test, enjoined the state from instituting the SSAT-II as a graduation requirement until the 1982-83 school year.

With respect to the other claims, the Court declared that the test itself ". . . has adequate content validity . . . and adequate construct validity" (Debra P. v. Turlington, 1979, p. 30). In addition, the Court declared itself "not convinced by the Plaintiffs' evidence that the test or any item should be invalidated for racial or ethnic bias" (Debra P. v. Turlington, 1979, p. 30). Finally, in examining the claim that the program served to reintroduce segregation in public schools as a consequence of instituting remedial classes, the Court admitted that while the compensatory education program "is disproportionately composed of black children . . . thus far the record is clear that the purpose of the . . . [remedial program] is to assist students and not to resegregate them" (Debra P. v. Turlington, 1979, p. 45). Thus, the Court found utilization of the results of the SSAT-II as a mechanism for remediation to be "neither a constitutional nor a statutory violation . . ." (Debra P. v. Turlington, 1979, p. 46).

In another Florida case, the NAACP has contested the right of the Department of Education to limit public access to the SSAT-II. The NAACP did not prosecute the case, and it has since been dropped.

In a third case, Brady v. Turlington, a Florida resident contended under the administrative Procedures Act that the Commissioner lacked the authority to establish scoring criteria. At the first hearing, the officer ruled in favor of the plaintiff. In an appeal filed by the State, the District Court of Appeals subsequently upheld the authority of the Commissioner.

A fourth challenge, Brady and Blount v. Turlington, also involved the scoring criteria. In this case, the plaintiffs sought, under the Administrative Procedures Act, to have the scoring procedures used in the 1977-78 statewide assessment declared invalid. The ruling favored this petition on the grounds that the proper administrative procedures for determining scoring procedures had not been followed. The District Court of Appeals subsequently upheld an appeal filed by the Department of Education and declared that the correct procedures had been followed.

In Delaware, the State Board of Education was sued by a Wilmington newspaper seeking the release of test results. The suit was settled out of court and the statewide results were released to the newspapers.

North Carolina has had two suits filed against it because its law, which requires minimum competency testing by means of a nationally standardized test and then reports of the results to the State Department of Education, applies not only to public schools but to non-public and private religious schools as well. The State was sued by the Southern Christian Leadership Council on the grounds that the law violated equal protection laws. The case (Green v. Hunt) was dismissed. The State was also sued by the Christian schools, who claimed that their First Amendment right to privacy was violated by the law. The State filed a counterclaim ordering compliance with the law. Subsequent litigation, however, makes compliance with this law a voluntary matter for the nonpublic and public schools.

The Virginia Department of Education was sued by the Richmond News Leader in 1979 for the release of the graduation competency test. The newspaper won the case, and tests are now released by the Department of Education. The Virginia General Assembly amended the Freedom of Information Act to require the release of tests within six months of the test administration.

Goals and Purposes

General goals. Of the general goals cited by state and local personnel in explaining why minimum competency testing was adopted, four common themes emerge. Program personnel reported that such programs were a way of introducing the principle of accountability into the management of public schools. Others pointed out that a chief goal behind minimum competency testing was to ensure that students master certain basic and/or life skills prior to being promoted or graduated. Still another commonly expressed goal was to clarify expectations regarding the content of education. That is, implementing a minimum competency testing program was described as an opportunity for soliciting input from a variety of groups and attempting to gain consensus regarding the basic elements of a public school education. Finally a fourth goal cited by program personnel was to allow for earlier identification of students in need of remediation in critical skills.

Specific purposes. These four general goals are reflected in the specific purposes cited by program personnel. In attempting to introduce accountability and ensure that all students master certain essential skills, many state and local programs have tied the mastery of competencies to high school graduation and/or grade-to-grade promotion. In viewing minimum competency testing as a means of clarifying community expectations regarding education many programs cited curriculum change as a specific purpose. Finally, for those who saw MCT programs as a way to identify students in need of remediation at an early stage, specific program purposes included requiring that all districts provide the remediation. In Table 5 state programs are categorized according to the specific purposes expressed by program personnel; in Table 6 local district programs are similarly categorized.

As shown in Table 5, 14 of the 31 state programs currently require, or in their original planning schedule intended to require, some measure of minimum competency in one or more subject areas for high school graduation. For only five state programs is the requirement in effect now; for the remainder, targeted implementation dates for the requirement range from 1980 to 1983. Oregon, while included in this figure, mandates only the broad competency areas for assessment, while leaving decisions as to how assessment might be linked to graduation up to the local school districts. Arizona, too, emphasizes local autonomy, and requires that students demonstrate a ninth-grade reading ability prior to graduation from high school.

TABLE 5

Expressed Goals and Purposes of State Programs

High School Graduation Related				Grade Promotion[1]	Remediation	Curriculum Change
Diploma Tied to Competency Achievement	Use of Attendance Certificates	Special Recognition on Diploma	Alternate Routes to Diploma			
Arizona[2] California-1980 Delaware-1981 Florida-1983 Georgia-1983 Maryland Nevada-1982 New York North Carolina Oregon[3] Tennessee-1982 Utah Vermont-1981 Virginia-1981	Florida (Georgia: under consideration) North Carolina Utah	Idaho (state seal) New Mexico	Maryland New York North Carolina	Arizona Nevada	California Connecticut Florida Georgia Idaho Kentucky Maryland Michigan Missouri Nebraska New Jersey New Mexico New York Nevada North Carolina South Carolina Tennessee Utah Virginia	Connecticut Delaware Georgia Massachusetts Maryland Nebraska New Hampshire New Jersey New Mexico Virginia

[1] Competency achievement is only one of the criteria for grade promotion, not the sole criterion.

[2] Reading achievement only, in addition to credit requirements.

[3] Mandated broad competency areas for graduation only; all decisions about how assessment is to be linked to graduation are made by local districts.

TABLE 6

Expressed Goals and Purposes of Local Programs

High School Graduation Related				Grade Promotion[1]	Remediation	Curriculum Change
Diploma Tied to Competency Achievement	Use of Attendance Certificates	Special Recognition on Diploma	Alternate Routes to Diploma			
Bettendorf-1982 Columbus ConVal-1981 Denver Detroit-1981 Gary Hillsborough-1983 Lawton-1981 Omaha Orange County Parkrose Rocky River-1982 Salem-1980 Santa Clara-1980 S. Burlington-1981 Thomas County-1983	Bettendorf	Houston Kanawha (Thomas County)[2]	Columbus	ConVal Columbus Houston[3] Lawton	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Columbus Detroit Fitchburg Gary Hillsborough Houston Kanawha Lawton Orange County Santa Clara	Columbus Detroit Houston Kanawha Lawton Orange County Thomas County

[1] Competency achievement is only one of the criteria for grade promotion, not the sole criterion.

[2] Planning to develop a performance profile to accompany the diploma.

[3] Midyear promotion is based on a number of factors, of which test scores are one.

In three of the 14 states that tie competency achievement to a high school diploma, students receive a certificate of attendance if they do not master the competencies. At present Georgia is considering a similar provision.

Idaho and New Mexico, rather than making the high school diploma contingent upon competency tests, provide special recognition on the diploma for competency achievement. Idaho, furthermore, has a district-option proficiency testing program, i.e., a program offered to districts on a strictly voluntary basis.

In some programs, like New York, there are alternative routes to a diploma. A student in New York, for example, can pass regular Regents exams and/or achieve an acceptable score on a standardized college admission examination in lieu of passing the Regents Competency Test.

Test results are taken into account in determining grade promotion for all or some of the elementary grades. It is important to note, however, that in no case do test results alone determine decisions about grade promotion.

Ten states cite curriculum changes as a specific purpose behind program implementation; test results are used along with other information to determine areas of weakness.

Nineteen states report that remediation is a specific purpose of their minimum competency testing programs. In some states, the mandate requires local districts to provide remediation; while in others, districts may decide what provisions, if any, regarding remediation to make. Table 7 lists both the state and local programs which have provisions specifying whether remediation is optional or mandatory. In nine states remediation is mandatory, while in 16 states it is optional.

By contrast with the state programs, a higher number of local district programs tie competency testing to the award of a high school diploma (see Table 6). Altogether, 16 out of the 20 local programs require, or will require by 1983, that students achieve competency in certain skills prior to graduation from high school. Of these 16 local programs, seven are in states with a mandated graduation requirement. If we exclude these seven, then it is the case that nine out of 20 local district programs have independently linked the results of a minimum competency test to graduation. Three local programs--Houston, Kanawha County, and Thomas County--either award special certificates of competency to those students demonstrating competency achievement or are considering such a possibility. One district, Bettendorf, awards certificates of attendance

TABLE 7

Mandatory vs. Optional Remediation Requirements in MCT Programs

Mandatory Remediation		Optional Remediation	
State	Local	State	Local
California	Santa Clara, CA	Alabama	Bettendorf, IA
Connecticut	Denver, CO	Georgia	Fitchburg, MA
Florida	Hillsborough, FL	Illinois	Charlotte-Mecklenburg, NC
Maryland	Gary, IN	Kansas	Thomas County, GA
New Jersey	Columbus, KS	Kentucky	S. Burlington, VT
New Mexico	Detroit, MI	Maine	Kanawha County, WV
New York	Lawton, MI	Massachusetts	
North Carolina	Omaha, NE	Michigan	
South Carolina	ConVal, NH	Missouri	
Virginia	Rocky River, OH	Nebraska	
	Salem, OR	Nevada	
	Portland, OR	Oregon	
	Houston, TX	Tennessee	
	Orange County, VA	Utah	
		Vermont	

to students who fail the competency test, while in one district, Columbus, Kansas, passing the competency test is considered as an alternative route to a diploma.

With respect to other specific purposes cited in programs, four local programs (Orange County, Lawton, ConVal, Columbus) use the test results as only one of the criteria for determining grade promotion. Again, as noted above, in no case do test results alone determine decisions about grade promotion.

For seven local programs, curriculum change was a specific purpose behind program implementation. With respect to remediation, 11 programs reported that providing such opportunities is a specific purpose. Again, the remediation may be optional or mandatory in nature, depending upon the mandate. See Table 7 for a listing of local programs in which remediation is mandatory or optional.

Competencies, Target Groups, and Testing Schedules

Summarized in Tables 8 and 9 are the numbers of programs that assess the various competency areas and the grade levels at which these areas are tested. In general, most programs emphasize the achievement of basic academic skills, but many also focus on the instruction and assessment of these skills in life-context situations. Several programs test for both kinds of skills, and a few test essentially academic skills in the lower grades and more applied, life-context skills in the upper grades. In Rocky River, Ohio, there is no competency test for life skills, but the district is beginning a mandatory course in life competency skills.

All programs have developed competencies in reading and mathematics. Twenty-seven state programs and 15 local district programs also test language arts and/or writing. A few programs have developed listening and speaking competencies; some have chosen history, government, and economics as important subjects to test. Only one program, that of Orange County, Virginia, has a series of tests specifically for science. In Georgia and in Thomas County, the local district studied in Georgia, the focus of the program is on life skills; the competencies are not categorized into typical subject area objectives, even though the competencies do, in fact, include skills in many of the traditional subject areas. Instead, they are grouped into the following categories: the Learner, the Individual, the Consumer, the Citizen, and the Producer.

TABLE 8

Number of Programs Assessing
Various Competency Areas

Competency Area	State	Local
Reading	All	All
Mathematics	All	All
Language Arts	17	5
Writing	10	10
Speaking	4	1
Listening	3	0
Other (e.g., democratic process, consumer economics, science)	7	2

TABLE 9

Competency Areas and Grade Levels Assessed

Competency Area	At least one K-3		At least one 4-6		At least one 7-8		At least one 9-12		Only 9-12	
	State	Local	State	Local	State	Local	State	Local	State	Local
Reading	10	8	16	10	14	9	16	8	6	9
Mathematics	10	8	16	10	14	9	16	8	6	9
Language Arts	4	2	8	3	9	3	9	3	2	5
Writing	2	4	3	5	4	4	3	5	2	5
Speaking	0	0	1	0	2	0	2	0	0	1
Listening	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Other (e.g., democratic process science	0	2	3	2	5	2	3	3	0	0

- In five state programs, decisions regarding what grades to test are left entirely to local districts.
- In two districts, teachers decide when certain competencies are to be tested.

About two-thirds of both the state and local programs test competencies at both the elementary and high school levels. Six state and six local programs test only at the secondary level. (Note that Table 9 does not reflect this fact, since a few local programs test only reading and mathematics at the high school level, but include other areas at other grade levels.) For almost all of these programs, the high school test is required for graduation. Of the programs that require a minimum competency test for graduation, most test in the tenth or eleventh grade, and some as early as the eighth or ninth grade, to ensure ample time for remediation and for several other opportunities to administer the test before graduation.

In five states (Illinois, Nebraska, Vermont, Arizona, and Oregon), the test schedule is not specified. In these programs, local districts and schools decide when a student is to be tested for achievement of particular competencies and when that student is to be retested. At the local district level, two sites permit teachers to decide when certain com- petencies will be tested. In South Burlington, Vermont, for example, a teacher may test a competency when the student is demonstrating mastery of it.

With respect to competency development, in about two-thirds of the state programs the competencies for all grade levels have been developed by the state. In Massachusetts and Tennessee, the state determines the competencies which are to be tested at the secondary level; these states also mandate competency assessment at the elementary level, but leave the responsibility for developing those competencies to the local districts. In a few states, local districts are free to decide which competencies are to be tested. In some cases these decisions are closely monitored by the State Department of Education, and in others the state provides a printed guide and/or workshops to help the local districts set up their programs. In some instances the grade levels to be tested are mandated by the state but the competencies are the option of the local districts. Most of the local district programs included in the study have developed their own competencies.

Standards and Standard Setting

Standard levels of performance on MCTs in the various programs are generally set by the state if the state is also responsible for developing the competencies, and by local districts if the responsibility for competency development lies with the local district. In some cases, states require the local districts to set the performance standards.

Only two programs set standards for the total test. In most other programs, standards are set for each competency, and/or the major subject areas rather than for specific competencies within those subject areas. Some of the newer programs have not yet established either standards or the procedures for setting them.

Listed in Table 10 are state and local programs using various methods for setting performance standards. Some programs are described as setting standards by administrative decision because they gave no rationale during the site visits for the standards they adopted. Also important to note is the fact that utilizing field-test data to set a standard or identifying standards as inherent in the definition of the competencies are processes which may overlap the other three procedrues listed. The programs noted under these categories may have, for example, set standards by administrative decision, Nedelsky, or contrasting groups in their use of field-test data. This was not, however, specified as such during the site visits; only the fact that they used field-test data was indicated.

Of the state programs in which standards are set by the state, nine based their standards on field test or test administration data, two used a contrasting groups method, one program used the Nedelsky method for some tests and the Angoff method for others, three defined standards as a part of their competency definitions, and five determined their standards by administrative decision. Shown in Table 11 are the 11 state programs in which standards have not been set at a state level. In six of these, decisions about standards are made by the local districts in the states. Two programs will not have standards set for them since they are studies about MCT, and three programs will be setting standards at a later date.

Two local programs--Detroit, Michigan and Thomas County, Georgia--have not yet determined what method to use for setting standards. Of those which have established standards, seven based them on field test or test administration data, three used contrasting groups, one used the Nedelsky method, one used a combination of the Nedelsky and Angoff methods, and six set standards by administrative decision. Omaha, Nebraska; Gary, Indiana; and ConVal, New Hampshire are examples of programs listed under more than one method, since in each case different methods were used for different tests or sets of competencies. The South Burlington, Vermont program is an example of one in which the standards (ranging from 80-100% accuracy depending on whether a competency tests a fact or a process) are built into the competencies. Fitchburg, Massachusetts, not included in the table, is a program in which the teachers make the decisions, on the basis of both student test scores and their own judgment, as to whether students have demonstrated mastery of the requisite competencies.

TABLE 10

Procedures Used in Setting Standards

PROCEDURE	STATE	LOCAL
Administrative Decision	Arizona[1] Michigan Missouri Nevada Tennessee[2]	Omaha, NE[3] Lawton, MI Houston, TX Gary, IN[3] Charlotte-Mecklenburg, NC Orange County, VA
By Contrasting Groups	Kentucky North Carolina	Gary, IN[3] ConVal, NH[3] Bettendorf, IA
Nedelsky/Angoff	New Jersey	Kanawha County, WV Rocky River, OH
Using Field Test Results and/or Other Statistical Procedures[4]	Alabama Florida Georgia Idaho Maryland New Mexico New York South Carolina Virginia	Columbus, KS Denver, CO Hillsborough, FL Omaha, NE[3] Portland, OR Salem, OR Santa Clara, CA
By Competency Definition[4]	Delaware Nebraska Vermont	S. Burlington, VT ConVal, NH[3]

1 Overall standard only; local districts set specific, individual standards.
2 On eighth-grade test only; no standards set for eleventh grade test.
3 Procedures for setting standards varied by test or set of competencies.
4 Not true standard setting procedures; first three procedures may have been used in latter two categories.

TABLE 11

Breakdown of State Programs in Which Standards Have Not Been Set

Local District Option or Decision	MCT Under Study; No Standards Set	Standards to be Set at a Later Date
California	Kansas	Connecticut
Illinois	Maine	Louisiana
Massachusetts		Rhode Island
New Hampshire		
Oregon		
Utah		

Test Instruments

A number of patterns have emerged for the distribution of the responsibility for developing or selecting test instruments and for the methods of accomplishing this task. See Table 12 for a classification of state programs according to whether the state or local districts assume or share responsibility for test development. In seven of the state-level programs, the states delegate complete responsibility for the choice of test instruments to the local districts. In the California, Oregon, and Illinois programs, for example, local districts may develop or select tests to suit their own populations. The states provide technical assistance, but local districts are not required to obtain state approval for their test instruments.

In 14 other state programs, local districts must utilize the tests developed or selected by the state. In these states, such as Florida, North Carolina, Michigan, and Nevada, local districts are not precluded from developing their own programs in addition to and independent of the state's, but they must comply with all requirements of the state program.

In the remaining eight state-level programs, the local districts share decision-making responsibilities with the state agency to a greater or lesser degree. Several programs, including those in Virginia, Tennessee, and Connecticut, require local districts to administer one or more state tests at the secondary level but permit the districts to choose their own instruments for assessment at the elementary level. In other programs, such as those in Nebraska and Massachusetts, the state has developed its own instruments which it offers to the local districts as one option for assessment. In the case of Massachusetts, local districts that choose not to use the state-developed, secondary-level instruments must either select one from a state-approved list or obtain approval for the test instruments they desire to use.

Maine and Kansas are exceptions to all of the above patterns in that they do not have permanently implemented programs. Maine conducted a one-time statewide assessment and is now engaged in an educational planning process, and Kansas is conducting a pilot program that may or may not lead to a decision to implement a permanent competency testing program. Development of the tests in both states, however, was the responsibility of the state.

In almost all of the local district programs studied, the district took on the responsibility for developing at least a part of the test instrument used in the testing program. In Orange County, Virginia, the local district has developed its own tests for reading and for graduation

TABLE 12

Responsibility for Test Development

Complete Responsibility Assumed by SEA	Responsibility Shared by SEA & LEA	Complete Responsibility LEAs
Alabama	Connecticut	Arizona
Florida	Delaware	California
Georgia	Kentucky	Illinois
Idaho	Massachusetts	New Hampshire
Louisiana	Missouri	Oregon
Maryland	Nebraska	Utah
Michigan	Tennessee	Vermont
Nevada	Virginia	
New Jersey		
New Mexico		
New York		
North Carolina		
Rhode Island		
South Carolina		

• Maine and Kansas are omitted; see page 22 for explanation.

competency, but uses the state-developed test instrument for mathematics. Some of the instruments in use at the local district level (i.e., South Burlington, Vermont and Contoocook Valley, New Hampshire) were developed by processes which have served as models for the state-level programs now under development.

Displayed in Table 13 are the programs categorized according to what particular methods of test development and/or selection they are using. Listed in the table are those states which assume all or some of the responsibility for instrument development as well as the 20 local districts. In the programs studied, instruments were either developed in-house or with the help of outside consultants (e.g., a consulting firm) or were selected from among commercially available ones. Also, some state and local programs elected to combine these options.

Of the 22 state programs listed, almost half (10) chose to pursue a single method for obtaining instruments. Three states developed their own tests in-house, while four elected to utilize outside consultants for test development. Three states selected a commercially available instrument, either as is or tailored by the publisher to the specific needs of the state. Of the remaining 12 states that chose to combine these procedures, six states developed instruments both in-house and through services provided by outside consultants. Two states developed tests in-house and selected commercially available instruments, while one (Virginia) elected both to use commercial instruments and to utilize consulting services to develop instruments. Finally, three states used all three methods for obtaining their test instruments. In the case of Nevada, for example, commercial tests were selected for use at the elementary levels, and teachers, with the assistance of outside consultants, developed the tests to be used at the secondary level.

Of the 20 local programs, five have developed instruments in-house, and the same number have selected existing instruments. Six districts have developed tests both in-house and through services provided by outside consultants or agencies.

Some of the competency tests used by Hillsborough County, Florida and Omaha, Nebraska were developed in-house and some are commercial tests. Omaha, for example, uses the Gates-McGinitie reading test as its competency test in that area. Gary, Indiana is the only local program in which some of the competency tests were developed in-house, one was developed under contract to Westinghouse Learning Corporation and one is a commercially available test. Finally, there were no local programs that utilized only consulting services for test development or who chose to use a combination of consulting services and commercial tests.

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TABLE 13

Test Instrument Development in State and Local Programs

METHOD	STATE	LOCAL
In-House Development only	Michigan Missouri Nebraska	Charlotte-Mecklenburg, NC Columbus, KS Fitchburg, MA Salem, OR S. Burlington, VT
Use of Consulting Services or Contracting Agency only	Connecticut* Maryland New Jersey Tennessee*	None
Use of Commercial Tests and/or Tests Tailored by the Publisher only	Delaware* Kentucky North Carolina	Bettendorf, IA Denver, CO Houston, TX Lawton, MI Rocky River, OH
In-House Development and Use of Consulting Services or Contractor	Alabama Florida Georgia Idaho Louisiana New York	ConVal, NH Detroit, MI Kanawha, WV Orange County, VA Parkrose, OR Santa Clara, CA
In-House Development and Use of Commercial or Tailored Tests	New Mexico South Carolina	Hillsborough, FL Omaha, NE Thomas County, GA
Use of Consulting Services or Contractor and Use of Commercial or Tailored Tests	Virginia	None
In-House Development and Use of Consulting Services or Contractor and Use of Commercial or Tailored Tests	Massachusetts Nevada Rhode Island	Gary, IN

* at one (grade) level only

• Omitted are the following seven states which delegate responsibility for test development entirely to local districts: Arizona, California, Illinois, New Hampshire, Oregon, Utah, Vermont.

• Maine and Kansas, as one-time pilot studies, are also omitted.

No one commercial test is used more than others. Among those chosen are the Senior High Assessment of Reading Performance (SHARP), the Test of Proficiency in Computational Skills (TOPICS), and the California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) published by CBT/McGraw-Hill; Gates-McGinitie Reading Tests: Survey F published by Teachers College Press; the Beckman-Beal Mathematical Competencies Tests for Enlightened Citizens; the SOBAR reading test put out by Science Research Associates; various tests published by Stanford Research Associates; the Adult Performance Level test published by American College Testing; and the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) published by Houghton-Mifflin Company.

Although most of the testing programs use a multiple-choice format for at least part of their testing, a large number require writing samples at various grade levels and a few require students to give some sort of oral presentation. Part of the Salem, Oregon writing test requires students to summarize a passage. Most tests are not timed, but in a few programs some sections of a test (e.g., in addition and multiplication) may be timed. The N-ABELS, in the Nebraska program, is one of the few assessments that is entirely performance-based. For various parts of the test, students are required to read aloud, locate words in a dictionary, and locate a topic and cross-reference in a card catalog. Among other districts which employ performance-based tests of skills are ConVal, New Hampshire, and South Burlington, Vermont. In the former, students are tested on such skills as answering a phone and taking messages, writing business letters, and giving oral presentations. In South Burlington, Vermont students are asked to complete common forms, to participate in a discussion, to give directions and to make various measurements (e.g., mass, length).

Test Administration

Test administration for all of the programs under study is handled at the local district level. While states may prepare manuals to assist test administrators, in all cases local personnel are responsible for this task. Typically, classroom teachers administer the tests in the elementary grades; counselors, teachers, and administrators administer them in secondary grades. In Gary, Indiana, it was found that teachers were assisting their students; therefore, classroom teachers no longer administer tests to their own students. Contoocook Valley, New Hampshire has a specially trained team (COMPASS) which is responsible for administering the tests.

South Burlington, Vermont has developed a unique system for administering and scoring the competency assessments at the junior and senior high school levels. In their system of "mentor groups," the mentors, or assessment administrators, consist of both classroom teachers and school administrators. Each mentor is assigned approximately 16 students from all grades, and the groups meet once a week. A student is to be a member of the same group throughout middle and high school years, thus giving each student the opportunity to establish an ongoing relationship with a faculty member. The mentor is responsible for assessing all the students in the basic competencies they are expected to have mastered at their grade level, and also for retesting to ensure that students have maintained their skills. The mentor scores each assessment of basic competency for the students in his or her group. If a student has demonstrated mastery, the date of the assessment is entered in the student's Pupil Progress Record. If a student demonstrates mastery when retested, that date is also recorded. If a student fails to demonstrate mastery when retested, the original date is erased, and he or she must demonstrate mastery again before it is thus recorded. Each mentor is assigned a counselor for assistance in understanding the intent of a competency or in administering an assessment.

Most districts also have a district coordinator, appointed either by the district or by the state, who is responsible for delivering the tests to teachers and counselors, collecting them for scoring and analysis, and ensuring test security.

Scoring and Analysis

About one-half of the state programs and two-thirds of the local district programs score and analyze the tests themselves, either by hand or with a computer. Slightly less than one-half of the state programs and the remaining one-third of the local district programs send all or part of their tests either to a consulting agency or to the test publisher for scoring and for an analysis of scores according to classroom, school, district, etc. A few of the state programs give local districts options as to who will score tests. As yet, some programs have not made decisions about scoring and analysis.

Reporting/Dissemination

Methods of reporting information about test scores are similar in most of the programs studied. Most programs enter test results in students' permanent records, regardless of whether or not test results are used for decisions about graduation or promotion. Parents are usually informed of their child's performance; if the child has not demonstrated mastery, some programs require a conference involving the student, the parents, the teacher, and often an administrator. Teachers and administrators usually receive a breakdown of test results, and some local district programs are required to report their local test results to the State Board of Education. In most cases, any information that does not permit the identification of individual students or teachers is open to the public and often released to the media.

Summarized in Table 14 are the numbers of state and local programs who send reports of their programs to various groups. In all, 24 state programs reported that they send results to administrators and 23 to boards of education. The next most frequently specified group was students. By contrast, local programs cited parents and students as the predominant groups receiving results. The third and fourth most frequently cited groups were teachers and administrators, respectively.

Provisions for Special Populations

Both state and local programs recognize various special populations and make provisions for testing these groups on the requisite competencies. Among the groups recognized are special education students (with some programs distinguishing among types of impairment, e.g., deafness, blindness, emotionally handicapped), multilingual or non-native speakers of English, children of migrant workers, and transfer students. In tailoring a minimum competency testing program to the needs of these special groups, some programs simply exempt groups, others prepare tests with different formats (e.g., Braille) or administer the test differently (e.g., reading it aloud), and still others permit students to take tests that differ from the typical minimum competency test in content. In addition to provisions such as these, some programs permit tests to be scored differently, i.e., according to different standards, and some choose to consider each member of a special population on a case-by-case basis. Finally, some state and local programs have yet to make such provisions and are in the process of studying this issue or, as in the case of some

TABLE 14

Dissemination of Results: Number of State and Local Programs Sending Reports to Various Groups

Reports Sent To:	Number of Programs	
	State	Local
Teachers	13	15
School Administrators	24	14
Board of Education	23	4
Legislators	7	0
Parents	15	18
Students	22	18

state programs, local districts are given the responsibility for determining what provisions, if any, to make. In Table 15 state and local programs are classified according to both what populations are recognized and what provisions have been made.

At both the state and local levels, the most commonly recognized group is that of special education students. Thirteen states and six local programs exempt from testing some or all students in this category. Nonetheless, state and local programs vary in the extent to which they recognize specific sub-groups, with some states like Florida, identifying a number of groups (e.g., hearing-impaired, visually-impaired, physically-handicapped). Depending upon the number recognized, all or some of the special education students may be exempted from testing.

In nine state and five local programs special education students may be administered minimum competency tests with different formats or according to different procedures. In New York, for example, allowances made for special education students include, depending upon the handicap, taking a longer time to complete the test, using a calculator, taking the test in Braille and having the test read aloud.

One program, California's, explicitly allows local districts to set differential standards for special education students and the State Department of Education addresses this topic in its technical assistance manual. Nonetheless, it should be noted that cases where a student may be exempted formally from the testing program, the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) may be rewritten to include some or all of the competencies that are required of regular students. In such cases the mode of assessment and/or the level of performance required may be altered in order to better accommodate the needs of the special education student.

Similarly, with respect to preparing tests that differ in content from the regular minimum competency tests, three local programs make such a provision for some or all of their special education students. These pro- visions generally call for tailoring the minimum competencies to the needs of particular special education students.

Rather than make any specific provisions for special education students, two states and seven local programs have elected to treat all or some of these students on a case-by-case basis. Finally, in states such as New Jersey, other provisions are made; in this state special education students are not required to, but may take the regular tests. In Virginia students may choose to delay testing.

The next most frequently recognized group of students are those who are limited in their ability to speak English or who are multilingual. More states than districts make special provisions for these students. At

TABLE 15

Provisions for Special Populations*

POPULATIONS:	Special Education--Learning Disabled		Multilingual--Limited English-Speaking		Migrant		Transfer		Other (students with "limiting handicaps" or multiyear plans)	
PROVISIONS	State	Local	State	Local	State	Local	State	Local	State	Local
Exemption	Alabama Connecticut California Georgia Idaho Kansas Kentucky Florida Maine Maryland Missouri Rhode Island Tennessee Vermont	Orange County Salem Columbus Kanawha Gary Char-Mecklnbg	Connecticut Massachusetts Rhode Island	None	None	None	Maryland Massachusetts	None	None	None
Tests with Different Formats/Administration Procedures	Delaware Florida Idaho Louisiana Missouri N. Carolina New York Tennessee Virginia	ConVal Kanawha Hillsborough Lawton Rocky River	New Jersey New York California	None	None	None	None	None	None	None
Tests with Different Content	None	Kanawha Lawton Salem	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None
Differential Standards Permitted	California	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None
Case-by-case Decisions	Nevada S. Carolina	Bettendorf Omaha Orange County Salem Santa Clara	None	Houston	None	None	None	None	Vermont	S. Burlington
Other (e.g. students tested under other programs, students may elect to delay taking tests)	Alabama Massachusetts Michigan New Jersey Virginia	None	Arizona Florida Georgia New Jersey Virginia	Hillsborough	California	Lawton	Idaho	None	None	None

* This chart is based on specifically stated provisions for specifically identified populations; it does not preclude the possibility that programs make provisions on a case-by-case basis as situations requiring these decisions arise.

the state level, three states exempt all or some multilingual students from taking minimum competency tests, while three other states either administer the tests differently or use tests with different formats. New Jersey, for example, is considering the possibility of developing equivalent tests in different languages. A variety of other provisions are made in states such as Arizona, Georgia, Florida, and Virginia. In Florida multilingual students may be exempted from taking the tests if they have been enrolled in an English-speaking school for less than two years prior to test administration.

With respect to children of migrant workers, one state and one local program either has made or is planning to make specific provisions. California is attempting to develop guidelines on how students moving between districts can satisfy competency standards which are, by state law, set individually by the districts. In Lawton, Michigan administrators are determining specific provisions to apply to its sizeable migrant population.

Three states make arrangements for transfer students. In Massachusetts districts may omit from their summary reports to the state scores of students who have transfered to the district after the tenth grade. In Idaho, which is a district-option testing program, provisions are made for students who move from a participating to a non-participating district; these students are given opportunities to continue competency assessments. Students mastering the competencies then receive a state seal on their diplomas.

Program Resources

General staffing. Although some programs have contracted with consulting agencies for developing their minimum competency programs, the staffing for the program usually comes from agencies within each state or local district. About three-fourths of the state programs and half of the local district programs are staffed primarily by assessment specialists. Most of the others are staffed by curriculum specialists.

Funding sources. The state provides the bulk of the funding for 20 of the state programs and one of the local programs studied; 15 of the local programs and 10 of the state programs are supported primarily at the local level. California, for example, mandates both testing and remedial programs for its students, but most of the funds for the development of these programs must come from the local district budgets. A few state and local programs have received federal funds for program

development. Six states have received funds under Titles I, III, or IV, while seven local programs have received money under Titles I, IV, V, or VI. Funds have been used for a variety of purposes, including providing in-service training and program dissemination.

Evaluation

Seven states and four local districts have already conducted evaluations of their competency testing programs. Others, such as Delaware, plan to do so when their testing programs are fully implemented. In some cases the evaluation has been conducted by an outside agency under contract to the state or district. In others, evaluative feedback has been solicited by state and local personnel. In two cases, Florida and Michigan, studies have been commissioned by groups affected by the programs; in these states the National Education Association in conjunction with the state chapter of the organization has sponsored reviews of the program.

Programs in which evaluations have been contracted out include New Hampshire and Fitchburg, Massachusetts. In the case of New Hampshire, faculty from Keene State College, Keene, New Hampshire reviewed all published and unpublished materials from the New Hampshire Accountability Project and interviewed key figures from various groups (e.g., teachers and administrators). In the final report submitted in June 1979, the evaluators reviewed the technical assistance provided by the state and offered recommendations concerning the future role of the state-level advisory committee, dissemination efforts, measuring the impact of the Project, and funding to local districts. The Co-Directors of the Accountability Project consider this an initial evaluation and are involved in contracting for a five-year longitudinal study to measure program impact upon student performance.

In Fitchburg, Massachusetts an initial evaluation was conducted by an outside contractor during the first year of program implementation. The results of this evaluation were used in developing the current Skill Achievement Monitoring system (SAM). In Spring 1978, Fitchburg administrators contracted with the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education at the University of Texas to study the use of SAM in the classroom. At the same time, administrators solicited the reactions of students and teachers through questionnaires. These studies revealed that there was potential for further staff development in the use of SAM. At present, Fitchburg is planning further studies, using both district and outside personnel.

Some states, such as Delaware, are currently developing procedures to evaluate program impact. In Delaware the Department of Education will be using on-site interviews coupled with measurement of student performance to assess both district implementation of the program and its impacts on students. In other states, such as Florida, responsibility for reviewing the program has been shared by groups outside the Department of Education. In Florida, for example, the State Senate and House Education Subcommittees are responsible for gathering evidence (e.g., testimony) on such areas as the effectiveness of program implementation. In Kansas the legislature will review the results of the competency-based testing program implemented on a trial basis for a two-year (1978-1980) program. At the end of the second year legislators will decide whether to implement such a program permanently.

Finally, in addition to studies which are conducted either under contract to program personnel or by program personnel, there are two cases in which panels have been formed to study particular programs. In 1978, under contract to the National Education Association and the Florida Education Association, Ralph Tyler headed a five-member panel to study the implementation of the Florida statewide assessment program. In 1974 Ernest House, along with Wendell Rivers and Daniel Stufflebeam, prepared an assessment of the Michigan state program; this group was under contract to the NEA and the Michigan Education Association. These studies have generally been critical of various aspects of the programs, and in Michigan, the findings prompted a formal reply to House et al. from the Michigan Department of Education. The Department, for example, questioned the criteria used by the investigators, and rebutted criticisms of the procedures used for constructing the test and the utility of the information yielded by the program. In Florida criticism centered around the schedule of implementation, an issue which has since been resolved in court (see section on associated litigation).

Future Directions

Future directions identified by program personnel include phasing in graduation requirements, improving and/or expanding program components, (e.g., investigating the possibility of phasing out state instruments in favor of locally developed ones), and determining whether to implement minimum competency testing on a permanent basis.

Georgia is among those states introducing graduation requirements over a period of time. By 1981 Georgia will have developed a tenth-grade basic skills test to assess the competencies identified as necessary to fulfill the role of a learner in society. By 1982 local districts must develop

ways to assess the competencies associated with other selected life roles; i.e., that of an individual, a consumer, a citizen, and producer. Beginning with the class of 1986, students must master all the competencies. This state will also be involved in disseminating the information and materials generated by the ten pilot sites that are currently developing competency-based systems of education.

Michigan plans to expand its competencies to include life skills. The state foresees implementing such a test on a preliminary basis at the secondary level.

Nevada is currently planning program improvements. For example, program personnel are studying ways to identify fast and accurate test readers to do holistic scoring and to improve the training given to test readers. The Department is also considering ways to improve the training of test administrators.

In Fitchburg, Massachusetts program administrators plan to study the relationship between the scores attained by students on Skill Achievement Monitoring (SAM) tests and those obtained on the state-developed secondary test of minimum basic skills. If, for example, scores on SAM are a good predictor of scores on the state test, the possibility exists for phasing out the state test entirely and using SAM tests to certify mastery of the skills required for graduation.

The state program in North Carolina is another example of one in which a series of studies on various topics is being planned. There the Department of Public Instruction is preparing to conduct more extensive test analysis with particular attention to item distractors, to examine current procedures for setting cutoff scores, to review remediation programs, to consider in depth the needs of exceptional children in relation to the testing program, to relate failure rates to school and socio-economic factors, and to compare teacher judgments of student achievement with student test performance.

Finally, in contrast to plans for program improvement or expansion, the Kansas Department of Education reports that legislators in 1980 will consider the question of whether to initiate competency testing on a permanent basis. At present, Kansas has a mandate to conduct a two-year pilot study, the results of which will be presented to legislators in 1980.